

March 19, 2019

To: Members of the Planning and Development Committee and Any Others Whom It May Concern

Re: Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 7192 and SB 874

As a parent of public school students in Wilton, I strongly oppose all sections pertaining to forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation in HB 7192, including sections 7 through 10, and in SB 874, including sections 1 through 4, and any other bill that proposes: i) the creation of a Commission for the purpose of studying the sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut Public Schools, iii) implementing forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of public schools, iv) penalizing public schools for NOT regionalizing or sharing services; v) removing resources or services from our school district; or vi) removing or reducing local control over school districts. The reasons for my position are set forth below.

Evidence does not support that the bills will improve educational outcomes or achieve cost savings. To the contrary, these bills seek to diminish local control of successful school districts across Connecticut that provide a high quality education to their students and operate cost effectively. We moved our family to Wilton after months of research and visiting towns in the tri-state area. We chose Wilton because of the quality and size of its schools, and the widely supported view that school district size plays a significant role in the quality of the education provided. Our school district does an outstanding job of providing students with the individualized attention they need to thrive, as well as access to a wide variety of classes and extracurricular programs that enhance their education.

Noticeably, these bills do not make any mention of education quality and outcomes. Further, the stated purpose of achieving cost efficiency is neither supported by significant bodies of research on this issue nor the experience of other states that have implemented or considered forced regionalization. In fact, research shows that forced school regionalization is not effective in achieving cost savings or improving educational outcomes. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving found that "K-12 regionalization can actually increase costs and harm educational outcomes...There is not a one-size-fits-all answer on K-12 regionalization. Results from other states have been mixed when it comes to large-scale regionalization." <http://www.hfpg.org/index.php/latest-updates/updates/hartford-foundation->

sponsors-report-k-12-school-district-regionalization1

Further, in a report on Consolidation of Schools and Districts, The National Education Policy Center found that “impoverished regions in particular often benefit from smaller schools and districts, and they can suffer irreversible damage if consolidation occurs. **For these reasons, decisions to deconsolidate or consolidate districts are best made on a case-by-case basis** [bold inserted].”

<https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/consolidation-schools-districts>

We recognize that Connecticut is experiencing a fiscal crisis and fully support voluntary cost sharing measures where appropriate and with local support. We strongly believe, however, that these bills will not improve Connecticut’s fiscal stability, will negatively impact educational outcomes and fail to produce the suggested cost efficiencies. There is ample evidence that the mere introduction of these bills has created uncertainty for families and job creators seeking to move to Connecticut, and that many are now considering moving to other states.

Please oppose the provisions in HB 7192 and SB 874 that pertain to regionalization, and any other legislation or legislative provisions that proposes: i) creating a Commission for the purpose of studying the forced sharing of services, redistricting or consolidating of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut Public Schools, iii) implementing forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of public schools, iv) penalizing public schools for NOT regionalizing or sharing services; v) removing resources or services from our school district; or vi) removing or reducing local control over school districts.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Claudia Avallone

Wilton, CT